



DEATH INVESTIGATION SUMMARY

Case Number: 2021-02840

WHITE, DANNY

County Pronounced: Bernalillo
Law Enforcement: APD
Agent: SGT MONTEZ
Date of Birth: [REDACTED] 1977
Pronounced Date/Time: 4/4/2021 8:10:00 PM
Central Office Investigator: Christopher Coffman
Deputy Field Investigator: Christopher Coffman COI

CAUSE OF DEATH

Sudden cardiac arrest during prone positioning and restraint

OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTORY CONDITIONS

Huntington's disease
Obesity
Hypertensive cardiovascular disease

MANNER OF DEATH

Homicide

Paul Yell MD

Forensic Pathology Fellow

Lori Proe DO

Medical Investigator, Assistant Professor of
Pathology

All signatures authenticated electronically

Date: 7/20/2021 11:48:35 PM

DECLARATION

The death of WHITE, DANNY was investigated by the Office of the Medical Investigator under the statutory authority of the Office of the Medical Investigator.

I, Lori Proe DO, a board certified anatomic, clinical and forensic licensed to practice pathology in the State of New Mexico, do declare that I personally performed or supervised the tasks described within this Death Investigation Summary document. It is only after careful consideration of all data available to me at the time that this report was finalized that I attest to the diagnoses and opinions stated herein.

Numerous photographs were obtained along the course of the examination. I have personally reviewed those photographs and attest that they are representative of findings reported in this document.

This document is divided into 8 sections with a final Procedural Notes section:

1. Summary and Opinion
2. External Examination
3. Medical Intervention
4. Postmortem Changes
5. Evidence of Injuries
6. Internal Examination
7. Microscopy
8. Postmortem Computed Tomography

Should you have questions after review of this material, please feel free to contact me at the Office of the Medical Investigator (Albuquerque, New Mexico) - 505-272-3053.

Medical Investigator

Lori Proe DO

Medical Investigator Trainee

Paul Yell MD

SUMMARY AND OPINION

PATHOLOGIC DIAGNOSES

- I. Sudden cardiac arrest during prone positioning and restraint
 - A. Advanced on law enforcement officers during response to domestic violence call
 - B. Became unresponsive while restrained in prone position by law enforcement officers
 - C. Petechial hemorrhages of eyelids and upper right back
- II. Huntington disease
 - A. Clinical signs and symptoms of Huntington disease
 - 1. Confirmed by genetic testing
 - B. Family history of Huntington disease
 - C. Ventriculomegaly and basal ganglia atrophy by postmortem gross examination
 - D. Neuronal loss and gliosis of the basal ganglia by postmortem histologic examination
 - 1. Ubiquitin positive inclusions by immunohistochemical staining
- III. Obesity (body mass index = 34 kg/m²)
 - A. Mild hepatic steatosis
- IV. Hypertensive cardiovascular disease
 - A. History of hypertension
 - B. Cardiomegaly (415 grams)
 - C. Nephrosclerosis
- V. Blunt trauma
 - A. Contusion, right cheek
 - B. Abrasions and contusions of trunk
 - 1. Subcutaneous and muscular hemorrhage
 - C. Abrasions and contusions of extremities
- VI. Mild atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease
 - A. Mild (up to 20%), atherosclerotic stenosis, left anterior descending coronary artery

SUMMARY AND OPINION

This 43-year-old man, Danny White, died of sudden cardiac arrest during prone positioning and restraint. Huntington disease, obesity and hypertensive cardiovascular disease were significant, contributing conditions.

According to reports, Mr. White was involved in an altercation with his stepfather on April 4, 2021. His family contacted law enforcement and officers responded to the home. During his interaction with the officers, Mr. White was initially seated in his room, watching television and occasionally shouting at them in response to their questions. Mr. White got out of his chair and approached the officers, who took him to the floor. The officers placed Mr. White on his stomach and restrained him. Mr. White initially appeared to struggle and then became unresponsive. The officers began attempts at cardiopulmonary resuscitation, which were unsuccessful.

Mr. White's medical history was significant for Huntington disease, an inherited disease of the brain that causes abnormal, uncontrolled movements, balance problems, psychiatric problems including depression and insomnia and cognitive problems including lack of impulse control and difficulties with organizing and processing thoughts. He was on multiple medications for this condition, used a walker due to previous multiple falls and had made one suicide attempt. Other conditions included high blood pressure (hypertension).

Autopsy examination revealed an obese man with bruises of the face, trunk and extremities and scrapes of the trunk and extremities. Some faint bruises of the wrists were consistent with having been caused by handcuffs, which were in place. There were small, ruptured blood vessels (petechial hemorrhages) in the eyelids. Petechial hemorrhages were also on the upper right back and were associated with bleeding in the underlying soft tissues of the back. There was also an area of bleeding in some of the muscles of the back.

Examination of the brain revealed changes consistent with Huntington disease, including enlargement of the open spaces (ventricles) and shrinking of other structures (basal ganglia). Examination of the brain tissue with a microscope showed loss of brain cells (neurons) in the shrunken areas of the brain.

The heart was enlarged, a change that is most often caused by high blood pressure and obesity, but that can also be associated with Huntington disease. As the heart enlarges, it requires more of the oxygen and nutrients supplied by blood in order to keep working well. Unfortunately, blood supply to the heart does not increase proportionately as the muscle gets bigger and the heart becomes vulnerable to inadequate blood supply. This increases the risk of an abnormal heart rhythm (arrhythmia) or a heart attack (myocardial infarction). There were changes of the kidneys caused by high blood pressure. There was mild narrowing (atherosclerosis) of one of the vessels that supplies blood to the heart muscle.

There were changes of the liver (fatty change) that can be caused by obesity and there was a small tumor of one kidney.

Toxicology testing of the blood detected delta-9 THC (active ingredient of marijuana), delta-9 carboxy THC (inactive breakdown product of marijuana) and 11-hydroxy delta-9 THC (active breakdown product of marijuana).

Mr. White had an enlarged heart with an increased oxygen requirement; this condition was probably caused by high blood pressure and obesity, but can also be associated with Huntington disease, which can affect the heart tissue and cause abnormal heart function. He was placed on the floor on his stomach, a position which can compromise breathing, particularly in the presence of obesity with increased abdominal fat. He was held down, which can restrict the ability of the chest to expand during breathing. This combination of conditions reduced Mr. White's ability to breathe, reduced the supply of oxygen to the heart and led to his death.

The manner of death is homicide.